

A singer's best friend? **Canine co-stars**



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Christopher Gillett likes to travel light. But for some jet-setting singers, a little excess baggage of the fluffy kind, is the perfect antidote to loneliness on the road.

When I flew into the USA for my current trip, my first port of call was at O'Hare, Chicago. For the first time, I noticed that they have a special immigration desk for people who just have hand luggage. Seeing as this was all I had packed, I went for it. For one thing, there was no queue.

'How long are you staying in the US?' asked the immigration man.

'About six weeks,' I replied.

'SIX WEEKS? And you only have one carry-on?'

'I'm a very good packer. It drives my wife mad.'

He laughed, took my fingerprints and let me through.

I bring this up because I've been thinking about singers with dogs. There are lots of singers with dogs. Little dogs usually, I grant you, but dogs nonetheless. And busy singers too – singers who travel a great deal with lots of luggage and paraphernalia. Singers, in short, who never get to use the hand-luggage-only queue. And on top of all that luggage, they bring their dogs.

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[Kiri Te Kanawa \(/uk/learn/artists/kiri-te-kanawa\)](#) has a couple of small dogs. Frederica von Stade has one. I know a mezzo who carries a Yorkie around in her handbag. Denyce Graves, who has sung Carmen just about everywhere on the planet and probably in outer space too, had (or possibly still has) a little fluffy

white dog called Madison that she would beckon to join on her on stage at the end of recitals. The Italian buffo baritone Bruno Praticò has a little dog that he takes everywhere, working him into productions where possible. I'm not sure if the dog is a union member and picks up a fee as a result, but I've seen the little chap scene-stealing in a *Barbiere di Siviglia* with Juan Diego Flórez and [Joyce di Donato](/uk/learn/artists/joyce-didonato) no less, so he's no Z-list artist. The dog, that is.

Some opera houses don't allow pets, though I could swear that I've seen this rule bypassed for stars. (On a quick side note, I was once in an opera which briefly featured a large eagle. The eagle had his own dressing room. I didn't.) Otherwise, it's not uncommon to trip over a poodle in the corridor, mid-opera, possibly being taken by an amenable dresser for a 'bathroom break' outside the stage door.

All the bother of caring for a pet on the road is indicative of something, though – something which I can completely understand. A dog is a constant, faithful companion – all too rare for the jet-setting singer. A dog is a friend who will go everywhere and anywhere with you, who loves you no matter how the show went, who doesn't care if you hit the high note or not.

For the lonely singer, I can see how a dog can be worth ten times his weight in excess baggage.

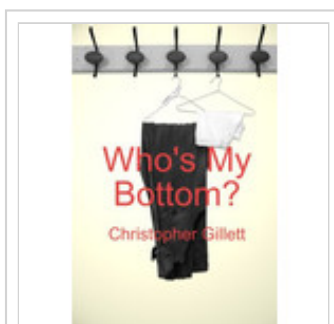
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The tenor's own blog is [christophergillett.co.uk. \(http://christophergillett.co.uk/\)](http://christophergillett.co.uk/)

Meet baritone [Luca Pisaroni's well-travelled dogs \(/uk/features/news/luca-pisaronis-dogs\).](/uk/features/news/luca-pisaronis-dogs)

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